

Those who slack, teach

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Abstract

This analysis explores the seemingly paradoxical and fairly common phenomenon occurring in films where underachieving slacker characters are portrayed as good role-models giving advice to ambitious protagonists aspiring success. By juxtaposing 15 diverse films in which a slacker helps the protagonist, observations of similarities and explications concludes this investigation to four categories concerning suggestions to why slackerism is commonly attributed to film mentors.

Thesis

Why is it common to portray slackers as good role-models, guiding and giving advice to ambitious aspirants in films, as they clearly are underachievers, and why does putting slackers in the roles of advice-givers work so well in cinematic storytelling?

Intention

Many films in many different types of genres have included the slacker character as a teacher to the protagonist, and with good reason, as "these teachers, though unwashed, scary, and alien ... are the hippest characters in the film."^[1] The slacker has taught the protagonist about life and success through most of film history, and has become a stereotypically loved and generally popular character.

In real life, however, it seems common to view slackers in general as selfish parasites who do not contribute to society, and who are prone to apathy and perhaps even substance abuse. Why is it then that this type of lifestyle is attributed, over and over again, to characters in films whose sole purpose is to guide and give advice to the protagonist in need of support? How often does not the protagonist get advice from the less ambitious and questionable slacker in the role of the mentor?

Seeing that this is a fairly common occurrence in not only films, but also in almost every other media dealing with storytelling as well, one may begin to wonder about this trend, or perhaps even tradition. Apparently, having a slacker mentor seems to work well enough for a lot of filmmakers to include in their stories, but would it not have worked better if an ambitious character were to point the aspirant in question in the right direction?

The fact that a character who is notoriously known for being best at doing nothing can be so good at inspiring people who want to accomplish something even seems somewhat paradoxical in a sense. Why is it that the protagonist often can be seen going to the slacker for guidance and advice, and not the hard-working enthusiast instead, who seems to have more experience in achieving success?

Method

By looking at a wide range of films including advice-giving slackers that differ in genre, a comparison can be made between their differences and similarities. Each film chosen for analysis will be summarized, concentrating on the relevant parts for the slacker characters

in relation with the protagonists. Both the characteristics of these slackers and how they help the protagonists in question to reach their sought-after goals will be pointed out in order to explain why they fit into this analysis.

After each film has been summarized, their similarities will be taken into account and formed into theories that support the fact that the slacker is a character that works well in films as an advice-giver to the protagonist in question.

Scope

There are a lot of slacker characters in various types of films, and far from everyone give advice or guide the protagonists. In many films, like for example *The Big Lebowski* (1992), *The Host* (2006), *Knocked Up* (2007) and *Jeff, Who Lives At Home* (2011) the protagonists are slackers themselves, and in films like *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Dazed and Confused* (1993) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), the slacker characters seem to be included mostly to create disparity between the different characters being represented. This analysis will therefore be limited to films in which the protagonist can be seen learning something from a slacker that somehow helps the protagonist in the end.

Definition

According to *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*, the noun "slacker" means "a person who evades work or duty"^[2], and this summarizes the core characteristics of the common advice-giving slacker often seen on film very well. This description will be used as a guideline to the slacker characters brought up in this analysis; if they are included in this analysis, then they are either avoiding work, duty, or both.

Context

There are many types of slackers, and as with everything else, they can all be divided into categories. In order to add structure to the analysis, the films examined have been divided into three categories: the travel companion, the personal trainer, and the random one-scener.

The travel companion

In many films, the protagonist goes on a journey along with some supporting characters who decide to come along. Many times, a slacker can be seen amongst these characters that are following the protagonist, helping along the way whenever the protagonist feels down or confused. These traveling companions follow the protagonists on their journeys, compared to characters who the protagonist just crosses paths with briefly.

The Junglebook (1967)

A most recognizable slacker, that probably stands as an inspiration for many slackers that came after him, is "the genial Baloo the Bear"^[3] from *The Junglebook*. Pairing up with his friend Bagheera, the careful and cunning panther, they help a human child named Mowgli to get back to his village before Shere Khan, the antagonist man-eating tiger, gets ahold of the human boy.

Mowgli first meets Baloo while lost from Bagheera in the jungle. Baloo comes strolling past Mowgli without any apparent care in the world, humming a cheerful melody, and when he sees the sad little boy sit alone in the jungle, he becomes interested. Provoking Mowgli's stubborn moodiness, Baloo begins to play-fight with him, befriending the lonely boy very quickly.

However, when Bagheera finds Mowgli in the care of Baloo, he reminds Mowgli that they ought to head on to the man-village. Mowgli, now having found a new friend, says that he "wanna stay here with you." Baloo is moved by this and promises Bagheera that he will "learn him all I know", upon which he begins to sing the now famous song called *Bare Necessities* to Mowgli.

The song is about not craving any more than you actually need, to settle with the "simple bare necessities", and that if you "don't spend your time lookin' around" and "stop thinkin' about it", "the bare necessities of life will come to you." The song is filled with

slacker advice like these. Amongst them are suggestions like "just try and relax", "cool it", and "forget about your worries and your strife."

What Baloo really is singing about, even though he himself might not know it, is that it is important to separate what you want from what you need. Mowgli might want to stay in the jungle with Baloo and all the other animals, and even though Baloo would like that too, this is not what Mowgli really needs. It has already been established that if Mowgli were to stay in the jungle he would undoubtedly risk his own life to Shere Khan the tiger.

However, the need goes deeper than that. Mowgli needs to be with those who can understand him, and even though he loves the animals of the jungle, none of them are his real family. Even though Baloo does not want to, he eventually agrees with Bagheera in that taking Mowgli to the man-village is what is best for him, and Baloo helps Bagheera to take Mowgli the rest of the way.

Together they defeat Shere Khan and get to the man-village. However, Mowgli still hesitates to leave the jungle and his friends. He quickly changes his mind when he sees a cute human girl in his own age, and runs off to follow her into the village. Content with their completed mission, Baloo and Bagheera leave while once again singing the song *Bare Necessities*, underlining that by not actively looking, Mowgli has finally found what he needs, rather than what he wants.

True Grit (1969)

Very much like *The Junglebook*, *True Grit* is about a young child who befriends a slacker while trying to achieve something. In Mowgli's case, that something is simply to get home. However, *True Grit* takes quite a different road trip. The film's protagonist Mattie Ross' quest is to kill Tom Chaney, the man who killed her father, and to track him down she seeks help amongst the local U.S. Marshals.

The one she chooses to convince in helping her happens to be "the fat, one-eyed, whisky-soaked"^[4] Rooster Cogburn, a poor and comfortable U.S. Marshal currently living at Asian dealer Chen Lee's store, where he sleeps until ten o'clock in the morning in a bed without slacks. When Rooster is not out catching criminals, he enjoys getting "drunk as a skunk"^[5] drinking confiscated whiskey and playing cards with Chen Lee, who mocks him for eating with his hands instead of chopsticks.

Despite being a U.S. Marshal, Rooster Cogburn sure has all the characteristics of a genuine slacker. So why does Mattie choose to go to Rooster instead of any of the other

competent U.S. Marshals? Because, she tells him, she hears that Rooster is "a man with true grit." Rooster is known locally to be the meanest of the U.S. Marshals, getting the job done rather than abiding by any law. Craving revenge for her father's death, Mattie seems to care less about whether Tom Chaney gets a fair trial or not. "I want Tom Chaney to hang for killing my father", she clearly states, and that is why Rooster Cogburn fits the bill.

As a counterpart to Rooster's rough character, the young and orderly Texas Ranger La Boeuf comes along to hunt down Tom Chaney, who he says has a reward on him La Boeuf intends to collect. Along the way to where Tom Chaney is believed to be, Rooster and La Boeuf display very much the same functions as Baloo and Bagheera respectively have towards each other in *The Junglebook*; their polarized characteristics and values works well against each other while initially working towards the very same goal - helping the protagonist.

Despite some questionable methods and disputes within this traveling party of three, Rooster helps Mattie in getting her revenge, and she finally kills Tom Chaney with her father's gun. It is implied at the end that Mattie may have found a new father-figure in Rooster, as she not only gives her father's gun to him, but also offers him to, when the time comes, be buried beside her along with her family. One could say that by seeking the help of a man that does the right thing rather than being lawful, Mattie did not only get her revenge, but perhaps more importantly a friend for life, much thanks to Rooster's self-confidence and open slacker behavior.

On a side note, when the 2010 remake of *True Grit* was made, Jeff Bridges, the actor who played the legendary slacker Jeff "The Dude" Lebowski in *The Big Lebowski* (1998), now did the part of Rooster Cogburn, thereby underlining Rooster as being a slacker by, consciously or subconsciously, borrowing certain recognizable elements from The Dude.

Aristocats (1970)

Phil Harris who did the voice of Baloo in *The Junglebook* here returns as the voice of the friendly loafer who guides the lost protagonists home, now in the shape of a "genial alley cat called J. Thomas O'Malley"^[6] the alley cat in *Aristocats*. Thomas O'Malley follows closely in the footsteps of Baloo, and even though *Aristocats* has nothing to do with *The Junglebook* other than being made by the same production company, one could almost

say that Thomas O'Malley and Baloo is more or less the same character, but with different physical appearance.

Like Baloo, Thomas stumbles upon the protagonists, here being three tame house kittens along with their lost mother Duchess, while taking an unspecific stroll, cheerfully humming on a melody. Not aware of Duchess having three kittens, he sings to her in a seductive manner that "the world is my backyard", that he "sips the cup of life with my fingers curled", and that he does not "worry what road to take."

Already during Thomas' song to Duchess, one of the kittens called Toulouse begins to mimic his charming alley cat style, and another kitten called Marie becomes impressed and begins to dream away when Thomas speaks lovely poetry to her mother. Even Berlioz, the third kitten, seems somewhat interested in who this alley cat is. To summarize their reactions, one could say that they all look up to him thanks to the first impression they get from him, and perhaps subconsciously they are hoping to find a father figure in Thomas.

Upon hearing that Duchess and her kittens are lost and in need of help, Thomas decides to help them getting home, and he is able to do this because he really has nothing better to do at the moment. On the way home to Paris, the party lead by Thomas meet a couple of geese who see Thomas as "a reprobate" and "a philanderer who trifles with unsuspecting women's hearts." They join the traveling party and soon find themselves in Paris, where the cats and the geese go separate ways.

Despite being in Paris, they are unable to travel further to their owner since the kittens are too tired to continue much further. Thomas then takes them to his "own penthouse pad", a shabby, abandoned attic, where, coincidentally, Thomas' jazz-playing friends Scatcat and his gang has "dropped by."

The traveling party joins in on their jam session after a conversation where "O'Malley and his pals [are] conversing in hippie-style dialogue"^[7], and it turns out that Thomas' jazz friends are as friendly as he is, as they sing that "while playing jazz you always have a welcome mat" amongst other inviting things.

After the great finale of the jam session, Scatcat and his gang leave Thomas' pad so that the kittens can go to bed. Believing to be alone, but actually being eavesdropped on by the curious kittens, Thomas and Duchess express their fondness towards each other, and when hearing that Duchess would be glad if Thomas could be their "father", the kittens become very glad.

The next morning, Thomas takes them home to their house where they unexpectedly are captured by the evil butler, who was the one sending the cats away in the first place so that he could receive the inheritance of his employer, who originally gave it to her cats. With the cats back, the butler cannot have the inheritance, so he captures them and plans to send them away once again.

That is when Thomas comes to the rescue along with his friends Scatcat and his gang. They manage to overpower the butler, and in the end not only Thomas is accepted into the household; the owner opens up a "home for all the alley cats of Paris." The film ends with them all singing the same jazz-song they did at Thomas' pad together with Scatcat and his gang. Much like Mowgli found a guide and a temporary father figure in Baloo, the kittens found their guide and father figure in the laid-back, jazz-loving Thomas O'Malley, the alley cat.

Sideways (2004)

As a pretty straightforward therapeutical road trip film, *Sideways* brings up how hard it can be to move on after a divorce, as the film's depressed protagonist and wine-knower Miles finds himself doing while taking his best friend Jack, a "simpleton who still sees life the way adolescents do"^[8], on a wine-tasting road trip before Jack's marriage. What originally was a trip meant for Jack quickly evolves into a preparation for when Miles gets back to the wedding and has to face his now remarried ex-wife, to which Jack tells him "to forget about all that shit. We're here to party, man."

Jack has been working as a voiceover actor on a couple of commercials here and there, and seems to be marrying partially for financial reasons. It is implied that, by marrying, Jack hopes to avoid work even more than he does now. He supports his friend Miles in not giving up on publishing his book, which Miles tries not to "get my hopes up" for. Before even leaving the block, and without Miles' permission, Jack opens a very "rare" bottle of wine that Miles has been "saving".

Jack pours it up and gives one glass of wine to Miles, despite the fact that Miles is driving, for a toast to their road trip lying ahead of them. At the breakfast next morning, Jack is inspired by a cute waitress and tells Miles that his mission during this road trip, and as a "best-man's gift", Jack will help Miles "to get laid", suggesting that that is what he needs to feel better. Jack himself also realizes that he is about to commit himself, and at a bar he toasts with Miles to his "last week of freedom."

When Miles meets an attractive acquaintance named Maya working at the restaurant they are eating at, Jack encourages him to try to approach her, but when Miles begin to count all the problems having a relationship with Maya would mean, Jack tells him not "to focus on the negative", and indeed Miles takes Jack's advice and asks Maya to join them for a drink later at the bar.

There, Jack lies to Maya and tells her that the reason for them being here is to celebrate Miles' book being published, so that more attention would go to Miles. All seems to go well, but when Maya asks them about their plans for the night, however, Miles tells her that they are going back to the motel to sleep. To this, Jack becomes angry at Miles, telling him that "the girl is looking to party, and you tell her that we're going back to the motel and crash?"

The morning after, Jack reminds Miles that "this is our week to get crazy. We should both be cutting loose." He does this partially because he himself wants to sleep with one last woman before marrying, but also partially because he believes that Miles needs to sleep with someone as well in order to get out of his depression. Jack then forces Miles out on a double date with Maya and her friend, who Jack sleeps with.

While Jack sleeps with Maya's friend, Miles and Maya is left alone to talk. They begin to connect, most notably through their common interest of wine, and this would most probably not have happened if Jack did not take the initiative of the double date in the first place, since Miles tells Jack that he has been around these parts many times and even knows about Maya since before, but have never asked her out on a date.

Finally at Jack's wedding, Miles meeting with his ex-wife goes rather well. Afterwards, alone at a roadside diner, Miles drinks his most valuable wine from a disposable cup together with a simple hamburger and some fries, most probably inspired by Jack spontaneously pouring up the "rare" wine at the beginning of their road trip Miles had been "saving". It clearly shows that Miles no longer waits for the right moment to come along, but like Jack having inspired him to do, makes the moments himself.

Thanks to the road trip with Jack and all that happened in it, Miles now comes out of his depression and goes off to visit Maya again, like he always have wanted to do. Jack's devotion to his wife might be questioned, but it stands clear that without him wanting Miles to join him in his "last week of freedom", Miles and Maya might never have had the chance of spending that much time together, helping Miles getting out of his depression.

On an interesting side note, there is also a small reference to *Star Wars* in *Sideways* where Jack advises Miles that he should not ruin the fun and drink too much. He then calls drinking too much and getting in a bad mood "going to the dark side", something that the protagonist in *Star Wars* is reminded of not to do on numerous occasions.

Little Miss Sunshine (2006)

It is not uncommon for slackers in films to have a vice for being intoxicated with either alcohol, as in *Drunken Master* (1978), or perhaps more commonly with marijuana, as expressed in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Clerks* (1994), *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and *The Descendants* (2011) to name a few.

Grandpa Edwin in *Little Miss Sunshine*, however, goes beyond that. He is a "lovable grandpa ... [who] inspires [his] granddaughter, but uses heroin."^[9] He got evicted from his retirement home for his heroin use, a habit he still has, and now lives with his family. When asked why he does heroin, Grandpa Edwin simply answers that he is "old. When you're old you're crazy not to do it." He also swears a lot, despite of his young granddaughter Olive being around, not caring what anybody else thinks of him.

While at a restaurant ordering food, Grandpa Edwin orders extra bacon, and when his son Richard objects to this, Richard's wife Sheryl says that "it is his life", meaning that he can blame himself for eating unhealthy food and possibly die earlier. Grandpa Edwin seems relieved that Sheryl understands and thanks her for letting him enjoy an unhealthy meal.

Olive orders ice-cream, and her father Richard tells her that if you eat ice-cream you become fat. About to enter a beauty contest, Olive becomes very unsure of both herself and whether or not she is allowed to eat the ice-cream. Grandpa Edwin quickly intervenes and tells Olive that "Richard is an idiot. I like a woman with meat on her bones."

Further, he teases Olive when she does not want her ice-cream by digging in himself and acting that he feels "sorry for anybody that doesn't want to enjoy their ice-cream so early in the morning", in which Olive seems to realize how good ice-cream is and begins to eat herself, acting like any normal child ought to act.

When Olive qualifies for the Little Miss Sunshine beauty contest, the whole family has to cram themselves into a small van and drive to the contest. Grandpa Edwin is happy to go, since it is he who has trained Olive in her dance routine. However, not all family

members are that happy to go since the overall family spirit is low and some of the family members even say that they hate each other.

That is why Grandpa Edwin feels the need to give a lot of advice during the trip to the competition. He begins with Dwayne, the teenage son who has taken a vow of silence until he gets into US Air Force Academy. Grandpa Edwin tells Dwayne not to "make the same mistakes I made when I was young. Fuck a lot of women, kid. Not just one woman, a lot of women."

When Richard fails at his career as a motivational speaker, Grandpa Edwin climbs from the back of the van to Richard in the driver's seat to tell him that "whatever happens you tried to do something on your own, which is more than most people ever do, and I include myself in that category. You took a big chance, and it took guts... and I'm proud of you."

He continues to give Olive advice when she once again finds herself in self-doubt. After rehearsing her dance routine with Grandpa Edwin at the motel they are staying at over the night, Olive asks Grandpa Edwin if she is pretty. Grandpa Edwin then sits beside her on the bed and tells her that she is "the most beautiful girl in the whole world", and when she says that she does not want to become a loser because her dad, Richard, hates losers, Grandpa Edwin explains to her that "a real loser is somebody who is so afraid of not winning they don't even try."

He then reminds her that they "are going to have fun tomorrow" and that they "can tell them all to go to hell" before locking himself up in the bathroom while she sleeps to do some heroin, on which he sadly overdoses and dies from. The death of Grandpa Edwin seems however to bring the family even closer since they decide to steal his body from the hospital in order to make it to the competition, hence forcing them to cooperate.

Finally at the competition, Olive shows up her dance routine that Grandpa Edwin taught her. It is a burlesque dance, inappropriate for the occasion, and to show their support to Olive, who almost gets dragged off the stage, all remaining family members gets up on stage and dances with her.

While dancing together they seem to express that losing never have been so much fun, and much of that is thanks to Grandpa Edwin's advice of doing "something on your own", and not to be "afraid of not winning". Even though he died halfway there, Grandpa Edwin's body travelled along with the family to the competition where his approach of not caring what anybody thinks of you finally brought the family together.

The personal trainer

Except for exercising slackerism to a certain extent, all these following so-called personal trainers have an important common background; in whatever they are teaching the protagonist, they have experience. They are former exercisers of the subject at hand, now perhaps a bit older and lazier, but still with the experience and knowledge that might save the protagonist.

Drunken Master (1978)

Often seen as the film responsible for the popularization of the conspicuous drunken fighting style later inspired by other martial arts films such as *The Forbidden Kingdom* (2008), *True Legend* (2010) and even parts of *The Matrix* (1999), *Drunken Master* helped actor Jackie Chan hit mainstream audience through comedic kung fu. It includes the stereotypical drunken master character taken from Chinese folklore, here called Beggar So, who teaches Wong the protagonist drunken boxing in order to finally beat the antagonist, which in this case is a feared hired killer called Thunderleg.

During the film's introduction part it becomes obvious that Wong is a cocky brat who needs to get his head out of the clouds and learn to respect people. Wong's father therefore sends him to train with Beggar So as a punishment for being a rascal. Beggar So is notoriously known for being excessively cruel to his students, so before Wong gets to meet him he makes a run for it with the intention of avoiding both Beggar So and his tough training.

When Wong gets caught with trying to avoid paying a restaurant bill, a fight breaks out in the restaurant, and Wong defends himself the best he can. Amongst the restaurant guests are a drunkard, who eventually joins the fight, aiding Wong. The drunkard, though intoxicated, fights off several enemies seemingly effortlessly, and occasionally while sitting down. Eventually, both the drunkard and Wong make a run for it, and when they have made it to a safe spot they begin to chat.

It is revealed that the drunkard is in fact the notorious Beggar So, and even though Wong tries to escape, Beggar So drags him off to a shed to begin his training. He does not live there though, as he says that he "has the sky as a roof, and sleep wherever I may." The shed is merely used for training Wong.

As expected, the drunken master Beggar So is a poor drunkard of a slacker, and his greatest asset is that he is constantly underestimated in fights due to his apparent

intoxicated state. While Wong is training, Beggar So often lies sleeping beside him, and he is almost constantly seen sipping wine from his iconic jug.

Soon enough, Wong begins to question Beggar So's torture-like training, meaning that he is not becoming a greater fighter just for getting a tougher body. Beggar So then decides to teach him the secret fighting technique of his "Eight Drunk Gods." This technique, developed and mastered by Beggar So, is based on slacker logic; why train to be the best at conventional fighting when you can act drunk and beat everyone that underestimates your condition?

Now eager to learn, Wong trains hard to imitate the eight drunk gods, however, he has a hard time taking the last style seriously, since the last style comes from a goddess called Miss He. This means that Wong has to act girlish while imitating the drunk as well, and even though Beggar So stresses the importance of learning all styles, Wong decides only to teach the styles of the remaining seven drunk gods.

Eventually, the hired killer Thunderleg gets an offer to kill Wong's father for money, so he lures him out in the forest to kill him. Wong comes to the rescue, and with the help of Beggar So's coaching, Wong manages to put up a fight, but when Beggar So suggests that Wong ought to use the eighth drunken god's technique, it becomes evident that Wong never learned Miss He's feminine style.

Wong almost loses against Thunderleg, but Beggar So suggests that Wong should "try and see her as your own Miss He." With this new input, Wong somehow manages to act like the last of the eight drunk gods, confusing his opponent with this new and unconventional style of fighting, and eventually wins over Thunderleg, thereby saving both his father's life as well as his previously ruined reputation as a no-good rascal.

Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back (1980)

Being one of the world's most popular franchise, *Star Wars* got where it is today thanks to the original trilogy starting with *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) and ending with *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* (1983). These three science fiction films have borrowed elements from numerous other films like *Flash Gordon* (1936), *The Searchers* (1956), and *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) amongst many others, so they undoubtedly include characters that almost seem cliché.

One of these classic characters is Yoda, "the last Jedi Master living, shriveled, soiled, and alone in exile on a swamp planet"^[10], who Luke flies off to see in order to

receive training so that he once and for all can defeat Lord Vader and the evil Empire. Expectations are high when Luke lands on the planet which Yoda is said to live; he does not know anything about Yoda except that he is supposed to be a Jedi master.

Deserted on Yoda's home planet after crash landing in a swamp, Luke goes off to find the Jedi master without even knowing where to begin to look. "An amusing encounter follows with Yoda"^[11] a strange, curious little creature dressed in simple clothes who walks with a cane and offers his help to Luke.

Luke declines his offer, probably due to the creature's puny appearance, and explains that he is "looking for a great warrior." After laughing at Luke's explanation, the little creature explains, with obvious grammatical errors, that "wars not make one great." Even though this creature seems old he is in very good spirits and seems to laugh a lot.

He then begins to steal Luke's food and gadgets, and even though he continues to offer his help as well as further friendship, Luke declines once again by explaining that he is "not looking for a friend" but "a Jedi master." The creature now claims that he knows this Jedi master, and begins to interest Luke once he utters the name of Yoda. Now Luke suddenly accepts his help, but not before eating, as the little creature suggests.

They go to the creature's small and simple hut, where he points out that Luke is too impatient about not being able to see Yoda as quickly as possible. He offers Luke food and reminds him, once again, about having "patience." Despite the creature's advice, Luke continues to stress him about seeing Yoda.

It turns out that the simple and underestimated little swamp creature really is the great Jedi master Yoda himself, and that he was only testing Luke's patience in order to find out whether or not he is ready to be trained. At the moment it seems like Luke failed Yoda's test of patience. Yoda explains that he has watched Luke for a long time, and that he has noticed that Luke never had "his mind on where he was" and "what he was doing. Adventure. Excitement. A Jedi craves not these things."

Even though Yoda considers Luke to be too "reckless" to train, he reconsiders and begins to teach him the ways of the Jedi. For most of the time he sits on Luke's back while he trains, telling him that he has to be "calm, at ease, passive" in order to be able to know the good side from the bad, dark side. Also, he constantly stresses the importance to "feel" the force.

When Luke's space ship sinks further down in the swamp he becomes low-spirited and believes that there is no way to get the space ship out of the swamp now. Yoda,

however, tells him that the only difference between a space ship and a simple rock is in Luke's mind, and Luke agrees to try to take the space ship out of the swamp by using the force Yoda have taught him. Yoda then advices Luke to "try not. Do or do not. There is no try."

These words could be seen as simply motivating, or they could be seen as a slacker's motto: do not bother with trying to do something too difficult. Since Yoda appears to know more or less that Luke is unable to lift the ship, this might be his way of telling him not to bother with it until he knows that he is able to do it.

Indeed Luke fails to lift the ship out of the swamp, so in order to prove the power of the force to Luke, Yoda simply uses the force to lift it out himself. "I don't believe it", Luke says in response to what he just saw the little creature do, in which Yoda responds that "that is why you failed", clearly emphasizing the importance of believing in yourself before trying.

Later, when Luke has a vision of his friends being in great danger, he decides do cancel the training in order to help his friends. Even though Yoda advices him to "complete the training" and to sacrifice his friends, Luke flies off to rescue them with the promise that he will return to Yoda to finish what they have begun. As Luke flies off, Yoda reminds the spirit of Obi-Wan about him objecting to train Luke from the beginning by saying: "told you I did. Reckless is he. Now, matters are worse."

Not only does Yoda not make an effort to help Luke save the lives of his friends, but he also regrets that he trained Luke. In fact, Yoda never really wanted to train him from the beginning. His lack of motivation shows in his opinion of Luke's recklessness and lack of patience, and he seems only moderately interested in defeating Lord Vader and the Empire.

This is, however, somewhat understandable since he lives like a hermit with little care about what is going on in the lives of those around him. However, Yoda is not selfish. He is simply able to accept the ways the universe is taking instead of trying to affect it, and that is what he teaches to Luke when he tells him to be patient.

At the final battle with Lord Vader and the Emperor in *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, Luke "moves self-confidently, with the physical and emotional control taught ... by Yoda"^[12] and is saved thanks to being patient instead of reckless, therefore being able to see the good that still resides in Lord Vader. Instead of striking Lord Vader down, he saves him from his evil self, and in return Lord Vader saves Luke's life from the Emperor,

thereby finally ending the Empire. As Yoda the swamp bum said: "wars not make one great."

The Lion King (1994)

Following previous slacker tradition from *The Junglebook* and *Aristocats*, Walt Disney Feature Animation includes a slacker duo as the guides and advice-givers for the protagonist in *The Lion King*. Simba, the heir of the animal kingdom, runs away from his home after his uncle Scar has blamed him for his father's death in order to become king himself.

Lost and in need of guidance, Simba gets taken care of by two outcasts named Timon and Pumba who lives "the great life" "wherever we want" with "no rules, no responsibilities" and eat easy caught insects which they choose to call "rare delicacies." Upon realizing that Simba has issues of the past that makes him unable to return to his home, Timon and Pumba teaches him from their experiences of being rejected outcasts to "put your past behind you", and "when the world turns its back on you, you turn your back on the world."

They then sing to him about their well-known "problem free philosophy: hakuna matata", meaning "no worries." They claim that "those two words will solve all your problems" and teaches him to eat the convenient food they eat, which Simba quickly learns to enjoy along with their complete slacker lifestyle. Simba might have managed life as an outcast by himself, but Timon and Pumba certainly helps him a great deal along the way of moving forward instead of pondering about the past.

"Adopting their 'no worries' philosophy, Simba grows into a bug-eating slacker."^[13] As Simba "enjoys life in the jungle with Pumbaa and Timon"^[14] as an outcast, he temporarily seem to forget his past and the problems back home, but he also seem to gain self-confidence through his new friendship with them. This is something he needs, and would probably not have if he did not meet Timon and Pumba, when he runs into his childhood friend Nala, who is out hunting for Scar, still ruling back home.

Nala begs Simba to go back home, claim his true right to be king, and thereby ending Scar's terrible reign, but Simba is too afraid to meet his past. That is when he meets Rafiki, a shaman baboon who potentially could have been listed here as a random one-scene slacker, since his only function is to give Simba these last words of advice before his final confrontation with Scar.

Rafiki cannot fit into the slacker character, however, because nothing is told about him except that he lives in a tree as sort of a medicine man. He may avoid his duty as a shaman now that his former employer, Simba's father, is dead, but that is only mere speculation. He does give Simba some advice by teaching him that "the past can hurt, but the way I see it you can either run from it, or learn from it."

Thanks to Timon and Pumba's friendship and invitation to their approach to life, and ultimately thanks to Rafiki's advice, Simba has once again found both courage and self-confidence, and now he also remembers his duty as the rightful heir. With the help of his friends, Simba confronts Scar, wins back the kingdom and restore it to what it once was. Without Timon and Pumba's prescribed healing period and training in the art of "hakuna matata", Simba might never have found himself.

City of Angels (1998)

When the German romantic film called *Wings of Desire* (1987) in English was to be remade for American audiences, some changes had to be made, as with every remake. Besides changing the language from German to English, the location from Berlin to Los Angeles, and the protagonist's love interest from a circus trapeze artist to a surgeon, a slacker character was developed as a personal counselor for the confused protagonist.

Being an angel, Seth, the protagonist, guides the newly dead to the afterlife. While waiting for a man to die on the operation table, he notices the fascinating determination of Maggie, the surgeon, who is having trouble giving up on the man. Seth quickly falls in love with Maggie, and since angels only are visible to humans whenever they wish to be, Seth often observes her while being invisible.

Since Maggie works at the hospital, Seth begins to hang around there quite a lot as well. There he befriends a patient who can feel his presence, even though he cannot see him. It turns out that this man, calling himself Nathaniel Messinger, can feel the presence of angels because he himself used to be one. He is introduced to the audience lying in a hospital bed enjoying some ice-cream while humming on a cheerful melody, even though he is not allowed to eat ice-cream before his operation.

After having trouble breathing, Maggie, also Nathaniel's doctor, asks him how he feels, Nathaniel answers that he is "ready to hit the waves." Maggie then replies that his "bodysurfing days are over." The fact that Nathaniel is a bodysurfer fits almost too well with the slacker persona, as surfers have a "slacker image"^[15]. Nathaniel, on the other hand,

enjoys the waves without any board, thereby making surf bums look almost ambitious in comparison.

Nathaniel introduces himself to Seth as a "glutton, hedonist, former celestial body, recent addition to the human race" while feasting upon "fabulous" food in a restaurant. Nathaniel is very prone to "advocate the value of ordinary sensual pleasures."^[16] As a former angel, he recognizes Seth's interest in Maggie, and, seeing what Seth needs, offers to "answer all your questions, friend." He explains that all Seth needs to do to become a human is to simply "fall to earth."

While taking a smoke with Seth at the top of a construction site, Nathaniel shows him a picture of his wife and tells him that she is the reason to why he once gave up being an angel, so in guiding Seth towards becoming a human for the sake of love, Nathaniel undoubtedly knows what he is talking about.

While up at the construction site, Nathaniel asks if Seth could take him to the beach where the angels gather to listen to the music that they can hear in the sunrise. While there, Nathaniel cannot hear the music, so he strips down naked and while going down to the water he shouts "I can't hear that, but you can't feel this!" to all the angels. He then gives Seth a brief lesson on how to bodysurf.

Nathaniel becomes Seth's friend and, when recovered from the operation, invites Seth and Maggie to a barbecue. From hereon, Nathaniel becomes a guide for both Seth and Maggie, as Maggie comes to ask Nathaniel about what Seth really is, since she successfully has discovered that he is not human. He helps them both with advice up until the point to where Seth decides to become a human and fall to earth, just like Nathaniel told him to.

At last, now that Seth is human, Seth and Maggie can fully express their love towards each other. However, the next morning Maggie dies in a traffic accident, and Seth is enters a period of deep grief in which he visits Nathaniel, who can understand him the best. In the end, Seth picks up bodysurfing in the sunrise at the beach in front of all the remaining angels, indicating that he not only has become more like his guide Nathaniel, but is also learning to enjoy life without Maggie.

Surf's Up (2007)

As a modern surf film, it is almost inevitable for *Surf's Up* to include the surfer-slacker stereotype Sean Penn helped characterize with his character Jeff Spicoli in *Fast Times at*

Ridgmont High (1982). Jeff is a name that not only he, but also the slacker protagonist in *Jeff, Who Lives At Home* (2011), and the most well-known slacker of them all has been attributed with; Jeff Bridges, the actor who played Jeff "The Dude" Lebowski in *The Big Lebowski* (1998), here uses the same slacker tools as before as he lends his voice to a legendary surfer called Big Z in *Surf's Up*.

Since the introduction of the short board in surfing, competition has grown rapidly. What was once a friendly and care-free lifestyle has become an extreme sport in which lives sometimes are threatened. *Surf's Up* brings this to the surface by telling the story of young Cody, a surfer penguin with big dreams of leaving home and winning a surfing competition.

At the annual Penguin World Surfing Championship, Cody wipes out on his first wave and gets rescued by a lifeguard who puts him in the care of a local slacker. It turns out that this slacker is former legendary surfer Big Z who up until now has been assumed dead. Big Z used to be the best at surfing until he realized that he no longer could hold his title as champion. He then faked his death and entered a secluded, but care-free, life.

As Cody realizes that he has found the legendary Big Z who once told him to "never give up to find a way, because that's what winners do", he asks for guidance and training for the competition. Big Z however, now untrained and unmotivated, goes so far as to show him how to make a surf board, emphasizing the importance to "let the tool do the work. Just like riding a wave. You let the wave do the work. You don't fight the wave."

When the board finally is done, Big Z offers to train Cody, but not in the water, as Cody would have hoped. Big Z makes Cody go through a series of very unserious training sequences on the beach in which Big Z mostly plays a bunch of pranks on Cody, Cody finishes the training montage with him playing a prank on Big Z instead. However, instead of getting angry at him, Big Z announces that Cody is ready to learn from him by saying: "So you're having fun, huh? Well Cody, you passed! You did it. You're ready. Let's surf!"

Cody then gets to learn how to surf with the legendary ex-surfer as a teacher. All goes well and they gradually become good friends. However, as the competition approaches it soon becomes clear to Big Z that Cody still cares about winning the competition. Despite Big Z's objection, Cody enters the competition.

As Cody is done taking his first big wave in the competition he says that he "just let go, and there it was", thereby indicating that he now surfs as Big Z has taught him. Thanks

to his new slacker-inspired lifestyle, Cody makes the finals. He is now up to compete against Tank, the main antagonist, and Chicken Joe, Cody's friend.

In the middle of the final wave, Tank intends to take out Chicken Joe and ruin the ride for him. However, Cody sacrifices his points in the competition, pushing Tank away from Chicken Joe, allowing him to win while Cody and Tank wipes out. All goes well and thanks to taking the advice of a slacker, Cody has won something much more important than a trophy - friends.

An interesting, second slacker character in *Surf's Up* is Chicken Joe. He is basically a stereotype of a laid-back surfer bum, and by simply having fun in the competition, not caring at all for the trophy, he scores enough points to make the finals and wins the trophy thanks to his good friend Cody's self-sacrifice. When asked in an interview afterwards how it feels like to win, Chicken Joe answers: "I won?"

This illustrates the paradoxical outcome of surfing being a sport for slackers very well, and makes it even more fitting to include two slackers as role-models, since true surfing indeed is "a strange sport where nobody keeps score, nobody gets to the finish line first. In fact, the whole notion of competition - the very soul of sport - runs contrary to the surfing ethic."¹⁷

The random one-scener

Advice does not necessarily have to come from a character who is associated with the protagonist. Unexpectedly for the protagonist, advice may pop up seemingly from nowhere at random by a total stranger when needed the most. Relevant advice from these kinds of slackers come in distinct scenes in which the slackers clearly express their main reason for being included in the film; it is here they help the protagonist realize what eventually must be done.

Clerks (1994)

As the debut film of Kevin Smith, *Clerks* introduces many slacker-like characters. Amongst them are Randal, a video rental store clerk who opens the store hours late, and when he does not watch films at work he hangs with the film's protagonist Dante at his work as a clerk at the Quick Stop Groceries. Randal tries to make Dante think clearly about his problems with his girlfriend, and could be seen as a personal trainer slacker to Dante, if he had succeeded in teaching him something valuable. While Dante might learn one thing or

two from his slacker friend Randal, it is in fact another slacker whose advice he seems to take more seriously.

Silent Bob, played by Kevin Smith himself, is part of a slacker duo commonly known as Jay and Silent Bob, a "drug-dealing, wall-leaning duo ... contributing nothing to society."^[18] Starting with *Clerks*, Jay and Silent Bob have continued to appear in many of Kevin Smith's films as the same slacker characters, and Silent Bob is often silent in the same manner, except when he is giving advice. Except for *Clerks*, films where Silent Bob follows the tradition of only speaking when giving advice to the protagonist include *Mallrats* (1995), *Chasing Amy* (1997), *Dogma* (1999), and *Clerks II* (2006).

These two no-gooders can be seen hanging outside the local Quick Stop Groceries where Dante works, and that is basically all they do, apart from occasionally dealing marijuana. While Jay talks to friends, dances and generally has a good time, Silent Bob simply stands leaning against the wall, smoking, and does not say anything except for the advice he gives to Dante towards the end of the film.

Dante's problem is that he is having trouble choosing which girl he wants to pursue. One of them is his ex-girlfriend Caitlin, who he still has feelings for, and the other is his current girlfriend Veronica, whom he is contemplating breaking up with. During the whole film, Dante wonders about this dilemma while trying to do a good job at the Quick Stop Groceries, even though it really is his day off.

When Jay and Silent Bob comes into the Quick Stop Groceries to buy some cigarettes (and to shoplift some candy), Jay starts to talk to Dante about his girlfriend Veronica, and that he should not dump her, since she seems to be very nice to him. Even then, Dante does not seem listen to this loud marijuana-dealer who speak with lots of profanity.

However, when Jay goes out of the store and expects Silent Bob to come with them, Silent Bob remains in front of the desk tell Dante that "there's a million fine looking women in the world, dude. They don't all bring you lasagna at work. Most of them just cheat on you", thereby breaking the silence that he, until now, has kept for the whole film.

Upon hearing this, Dante says to himself that Silent Bob "is right", and he realizes that he wants to be with Veronica. As a contrast to Randal's and Jay's constant profound ramblings, Silent Bob's advice is actually heard by Dante, and by not constantly pestering him with advice and pin-pointers on how he ought to act and behave, Silent Bob speaks

only when he has to, and thereby gets his message through to Dante, who then makes an effort to make it work with Veronica.

Notting Hill (1999)

William first meet the famous film star Anna Scott when she walks into his book store. From there they soon fall in love with each other and develop a relationship. Since they both are from very different worlds, they stumble upon a lot of problems with having a relationship together. As William's lodger Spike, for instance, tells "a few people down the pub" about William's secret relationship with Anna Scott, the press becomes aware of it and scare Anna away from William, leaving William alone once again.

Spike has the appearance of someone who does not care about his appearance; he is never seen clean shaven and he often walks around the apartment, answering "the door wearing only his underpants."^[19] He casually uses obnoxious vocabulary and does not make much of an effort remembering things like important phone messages for William. When Anna leaves an important message, Spike barely remembers to mention it to William by saying that "some American girl called Anna" called.

When William finds himself longing for Anna, he once asks his friend Spike for advice. Having trouble expressing himself, William tries to explain his feelings to Spike in a simile, saying that it is as if he has "opened Pandoras box, and there's trouble inside." From here the whole situation turns into sort of a false advice-giving scene, ending in a comical relief instead, as Spike, trying to understand, says that he "knew a girl at school called Pandora. Never got to see her 'box' though."

Anna does, however, return to the book store and to William, "asking him to love her" once again. William is, however, too afraid to reenter a relationship with Anna, as he knows the pain she caused last time she left him, so he answers that his "relatively inexperienced heart would I fear not recover if I was once again cast aside, as I would absolutely expect to be." Heartbroken, she leaves the book store.

Originally, Spike may be the reason to why the press became aware of Anna's relationship with William, but one could argue that it was inevitable, and perhaps for the best. However, Spike finally helps William to solve his love-issues with Anna by clearly and truthfully saying that William is a "daft prick" by saying no to her. Spike giving advice to William is not only concentrated to once scene; it is concentrated to one line: "you daft prick."

After being called a "daft prick" by Spike, William realizes that he is exactly that if he denies his love to Anna. Together with his friends, along with Spike, William goes off to see Anna. Inspired by Spike's opinion of him, William tells Anna that he has realized that he was a "daft prick" by saying no to her. Upon hearing this, she reconsiders and they finally get to have each other. Perhaps it takes a care-free slacker who cares little about what people think of him to speak plainly when it is needed the most.

Office Space (1999)

As with anything made by Mike Judge, *Office Space* deals with slackerism to some extent. Here we have the film's protagonist Peter who dislikes his job at a software company, where he mostly sits and stare in his cubicle. He is genuinely unsatisfied with his life, while his next door neighbor Lawrence seems to have a complete opposite view of life, even though they both enjoy simply doing nothing.

Like any true slacker, Lawrence is not much of an athlete. He does, however, enjoy fishing, which probably is one of the most relaxing and slacker-like sport there is. Although he may not be avoiding work, he is certainly avoiding duty; Lawrence has no goal in life whatsoever, and when asked what he would do with a million dollars, he answers, without hesitation, that he would sleep with "two chicks at the same time, man." He is clearly a life-loving, simple man with almost no ambitions at all.

When Lawrence asks Peter what he would do with a million dollars, Peter answers that he would "relax. I would sit on my ass all day. I would do nothing." While Peter thinks that you need to be economically independent in order to be able to enjoy yourself, Lawrence believes otherwise, as he tells Peter that "you don't need a million dollars to do nothing, man." At the moment, Peter does not understand Lawrence, but his opinion somehow sinks in subconsciously, because after being hypnotized to being completely relaxed, Peter sleeps in to such an extent that he almost gets fired.

He then involves two of his co-workers in stealing a large amount of money from the software company they work at, but when the caper does not go as planned Peter finds himself back to zero. Realizing that loosing the stolen money probably was for the best, Peter finally finds a job that he enjoys.

Inspired by his neighbor Lawrence, Peter finds himself and becomes a life-loving construction worker. It may have taken a while, but Lawrence's advice of not needing any

money to be able to do what you want finally sinks into Peter's mind, and, as he says to his former co-workers, working outdoors is "not too bad."

Finding Nemo (2003)

After having lost his wife and all their other children to a carnivorous fish, Marlin the clownfish is overprotective to Nemo and barely allows him to go to school, since he does not think the Nemo is capable of taking care of himself. To prove his father wrong, Nemo swims out to open water, but is captured by a scuba diver. To save his son, Marlin embarks on a journey to find Sydney, the only clue left by the scuba diver to where he has taken Nemo.

On the way to Sydney, Marlin meets the "surfer-dude turtle, Crush"^[20], and his sea turtle son named Squirt. Crush and Squirt is swimming with the East Australian Current, and they both appear to have a surfer-slacker inspired life-style; they speak slow, use expressions like "dude", and enjoy the thrills of riding the current similar to the surfers' enjoying the thrills of riding waves.

When riding the current, Squirt momentarily loses control and falls out of the current. Marlin freaks out and expects the worst. While trying to save Squirt, Marlin is stopped by Crush, who wants to "see what Squirt does, flying solo." Indeed, Squirt proves himself to be quite alright by himself, and returns to the current without any apparent problems. When Squirt returns to his father Crush, he receives praise for riding outside the current, instead of being scolded, like Marlin probably would have done with his son Nemo.

Crush then tells Nemo about the wonders of being a father, and that newly hatched sea turtles somehow finds their way from the beach back into the ocean again. When Marlin asks Crush how you know when they are ready, Crush simply answers that "you never really know, but when they know, you'll know, you know." While talking to Crush, Marlin watches other sea turtle kids playing and having a good time in the current with their parents, not worrying about anything.

When the proper spot for exiting the current to Sydney comes up, Crush and Squirt simply pushes Marlin out of the current, making him swirl and rush through the water with a speed that he seems to enjoy. As Crush gives his final directions to Sydney, he also advises Marlin to have "no worries", which Marlin now seem inspired to have.

Not only has Marlin been taught a lesson in how not to be overprotective can be rewarding as a parent, but being with the turtles have also given him an enjoyable moment to breathe and regain his powers for the remaining journey ahead of him. In the end, Marlin does find Nemo and as he sees him going off for school, he no longer tells him to "be safe", but, inspired by Crush's relaxed approach towards Squirt's safety, Marlin now tells Nemo to "have an adventure."

The Descendants (2011)

When Hawaiian lawyer Matt King's wife is put into a coma, Matt finds it necessary to bring his family together again. His two daughters, Scottie and Alex, are foulmouthed and inappropriate, and it becomes clear early on that Matt is not used to handle either one of them. To him, fatherhood seems almost like a new thing, now when their mother is gone.

Matt soon learns that his wife was cheating on him, and that she never will wake up from her coma. Quickly, "the emotionally distant King discovers what little he truly knows about his ailing wife and two adolescent daughters."^[21] He then decides to go tell his wife's former lover Brian Speer that she is going to die, and brings his two daughters with him in this search for closure. With her on this trip, and despite of her father's objections, Alex brings a friend with her. This friend is teenage stoner-slacker Sid, who barely knows why he is coming along.

Sid does not try to be liked, and even though it make Matt hate him more, Sid sometimes says funny, inappropriate remarks just to seemingly amuse himself. Not even Alex, whose idea it was to bring him along in the first place, seems to like Sid, but throughout the film Sid does not seem to care whether he is liked or not. He just wants to have a good time.

One night, unexpectedly, Matt goes to Sid's room, wakes him up and asks him for advice. He tells Sid that he is worried about his daughters and asks him what Alex tells him. Sid then tells Matt that Alex and he "don't really talk about our issues. We deal with our shit by talking about other stuff and having a good time." When asked what he thinks Matt should do about his daughters, Sid jokes away by telling him that he would "exchange them for sons, I guess."

Matt then learns about Sid's father and that he died in a car accident a few months ago. It is a subtle change, but Matt now seems to see Sid in a slightly different light since he understands that Sid also knows what it is like to lose a close family member, and

even though not spoken out loud, Matt leaves Sid's room with a new insight on how grief affect everyone differently, including his own daughters.

Sid may not have a huge impact in Matt's decisions or the outcome in *The Descendants*, but Matt does decide to go to him for advice regarding his daughters' behavior, and thanks to Sid he gets a small lesson in how he may handle his daughters. Even if it is the trip that brings Matt and his daughters together again, *The Descendants* end with them cuddling up in the sofa, watching TV and sharing ice cream. They do not talk about their issues. Instead they are simply having a good time. Consciously or subconsciously, it seems that Matt followed Sid's advice regarding his daughters.

Analysis

The following four categories are similarities found between the 15 films in question. They suggest explications to why slackerism is commonly attributed to film mentors.

We listen to people who appear to have found themselves

Protagonists seem to go to slackers for advice since slackers act self-confident and care-free. Often, the main goal for the protagonist of many films is to find themselves, so it makes much sense to seek out persons who are already at peace with themselves in order to learn how to achieve the same level of self-confidence in order to accomplish the task the protagonist originally was meant to accomplish. Slackers appear to be content about everything in life, and that is perhaps the main reason to why they can be found giving advice to ambitious adventurers who are in a temporary state of self-doubt.

Sometimes, the protagonist might hear a rumor of great master of some sort, but when finally meeting this master, great disappointment follows as the master turns out to appear like a washed-up has-been, as in *Star Wars* and *Surf's Up*, or an overall unpleasant person with questionable morals and methods, as in *True Grit* and *Drunken Master*. In these cases it is not the slacker himself who appears to have found himself and being able to give advice to others, but the rumor about the slacker. In the end, however, it makes no difference, since the protagonist always seems to remain with the slacker in question either way.

- In *The Junglebook*, Baloo appears not to have a care in the world as he comes strolling, humming on a melody. He also seems to know everything there is to know about the jungle, and teaches Mowgli not only how to fight, but how to collect food.
- In *True Grit*, Mattie actively searches for a man with "true grit", and finds the very self-confident and care-free Rooster Cogburn.
- In *Aristocats*, Thomas O'Malley appears as care-free as any slacker as he comes strolling by, singing about how free he is to Duchess.
- In *Sideways*, Miles gets inspired by Jack's bold and uncomplicated way with women, and like Jack, Miles learns not to wait for something to happen.
- In *Little Miss Sunshine*, especially Olive listens to Grandpa Edwin as he is the only family member so seem genuinely interested enough in her dream of winning the

beauty competition, and the fact that Grandpa Edwin does not care what anybody else thinks of him might have inspired the whole family in the end to dance together.

- In *Drunken Master*, Wong wants to learn from Beggar so after having seen his seemingly easy, but amazingly effective fighting skills.
- In *Star Wars*, Luke goes to find the rumored great Jedi master named Yoda to learn the ways of the force. Believing Yoda to be a great warrior, however, Luke is at first deceived by Yoda's underestimated appearance.
- In *The Lion King*, Timon and Pumba immediately begin to teach Simba about their uncomplicated way of looking at life, and as they do, they seem to know it all.
- In *City of Angels*, the sick but still relaxed and in control Nathaniel can feel the presence of Seth while others cannot. This interests Seth, and, being interested in humans, seeks his knowledge and advice.
- In *Surf's Up*, Cody almost demands to be trained by the legendary Big Z when he finds out who he really is, since he knows that Big Z used to be the best surfer in the world.
- In *Clerks*, Dante seems to block out all advice given to him except the one line coming from Silent Bob. Thanks to his silence and self-confident approach, Silent Bob appears to be above everyone else, and, unlike Jay and Randal who speaks all the time, Silent Bob gets his words through to Dante.
- In *Notting Hill*, Spike is somewhat known to say exactly what is on his mind without any care of what people might think of him for that, so in a moment where being truthful to William is absolutely necessary, Spike is the only one of his friends who is.
- In *Office Space*, Lawrence appears to be content with just about everything there is in his life, and that is probably why Peter listens to him in the first place, and ends up just like him in the end.
- In *Finding Nemo*, Marlin the clownfish's life is more or less saved by Crush the turtle, and upon talking with him, Marlin is amazed and inspired by how Crush can have such a care-free and rewarding relationship with his son Squirt without really trying.
- In *The Descendants*, Matt goes to Sid for advice as he believes Sid to comfort his daughter. Matt wants to be able to do that, and finds himself asking the slacker for help.

Inactivity makes a character open for new experiences

Slackers have an open persona that is easy to befriend. By not doing anything important, slackers open themselves up for both new friends and new adventures. If a slacker would have been replaced with busy person with their own agendas, those persons would probably not have had the same generous time to either befriend or help the protagonist. By using slackers, however, who very often seems to have nothing going on for them at all, they often seem to have little problem in joining the protagonists in whatever they need help with, and by having that stereotypical hippie-like persona, slackers are often more than happy to make new friends.

- In *The Junglebook*, Baloo comes strolling past Mowgli without a care in the world and, having nothing better to do, begins to play-fight with him. Therefore, they quickly become friends.
- In *True Grit*, Rooster Cogburn evidently does not have too much to do, as he is seen playing cards and drinking hard at night, and sleeping until late the day after. Also, he needs the money Mattie offers him, as he currently sleeps at an asian store.
- In *Aristocats*, Thomas O'Malley is an alley cat without any obligations who also happens to have a place in Paris, where Duchess and her kittens are going.
- In *Sideways*, Miles and Jack's trip together has long been planned in beforehand as Miles' gift to Jack before he is getting married. This is partly possible thanks to Jack working freelance from time to time as a commercial actor, and now marries partially so that he does not have to work at all.
- In *Little Miss Sunshine*, Grandpa Edwin is retired and got kicked out of his retirement home, so he has got all time in the world for his family.
- In *Drunken Master*, Beggar So is a bum without a home or occupation who gets paid by Wong's father to train him.
- In *Star Wars*, Yoda lives in a secluded, simple hut on a swamp planet, and even though it is not explained what it is that he does, he sure does not do anything too important, since he finally agrees to train Luke.
- In *The Lion King*, Timon and Pumba is living the good life, gathering easy-caught food as they like and go wherever they please, and that is why they come upon Simba in the first place and are able to take him in as one of their own.

- In *City of Angels*, Nathaniel does not currently work as he is being treated at the hospital, but still takes the time to enjoy himself, taking Seth out to eat and going bodysurfing while teaching him about becoming human.
- In *Surf's Up*, Big Z actively seeks to become a secluded nobody, as he realizes that being the best at something no longer fits him. With all that spare time, he offers to help Cody after taking care of his wounds.
- In *Clerks*, Silent Bob stands outside the Quick Stop Groceries all day with Jay doing nothing, only popping by the actual store when they want to shoplift. When Jay leaves, Silent Bob does not rush to follow him, but stays to deliver his opinion about girls to Dante.
- In *Notting Hill*, Spike is often seen being there for William, as both a slacker-lodger and a laid-back friend. When it is needed to, Spike finds the time to speak plainly about giving up Anna is a big mistake.
- In *Office Space*, Lawrence simply seems to enjoy coming over to his friend's apartment for a beer and a chat.
- In *Finding Nemo*, Crush the turtle is riding on the current with his son Squirt when they coincidentally come upon Marlin and take care of him after an accident. Having nothing better to do while riding the current, he converses with Marlin about not being overprotective.
- In *The Descendants*, Sid finds himself on the trip Matt initially intended for him and his daughters only, but as Matt's oldest daughter wants Sid with her, and as Sid evidently does not have much else going on, he comes along.

A slacker gives color to the character orchestration

It is important to have characters that does not look or act too similar in films. Otherwise, the audience may become confused as to who is who. Furthermore, a well divided grouping of characters in terms of goals, behavior, looks, etcetera, will often fuel the dynamic tension between them. Putting a character who fully exercises slackerism next to a highly motivated character creates contrast and crossed wills, and their interactions with each other is most probably going to become very interesting for an audience to follow.

- In *The Junglebook*, while Baloo wants to have fun with Mowgli and somewhat supports him wanting to stay in the jungle, Bagheera stresses the importance of getting him back to the village.
- In *True Grit*, Rooster Cogburn often finds himself disagreeing with the rest of the traveling party of three, especially La Boeuf, who continues to question Cogburn's seemingly risky methods.
- In *Aristocats*, putting a family of rich cats from the upper class in the care of Thomas O'Malley, the homeless loafer, creates interesting cultural experiences, especially for the kittens, who seems to find Thomas both strange and intriguing.
- In *Sideways*, Miles and Jack often seem like each other's complete opposites in how to handle a situation; while Miles wants to stay safe, Jack wants to party.
- In *Little Miss Sunshine*, no one in the family seems to understand Grandpa Edwin and his care-free, extravagant slacker lifestyle, and when it comes to raising Olivia, especially Richard and he seems to disagree completely.
- In *Drunken Master*, Beggar So teaches and practices the very unique and extravagant drunken fighting style, which makes him and his methods very different from all the others who fight.
- In *Star Wars*, Yoda almost finds Luke too reckless, impatient and doubtful to train. In return, Luke almost finds Yoda too idle in his cryptic ways of thinking to trust him.
- In *The Lion King*, Timon and Pumba presents Simba with a slacker life-style that is very different to where he originally comes from, as all the lions there are hard-working and responsible.
- In *City of Angels*, Nathaniel stands out from all the humans in that he is completely at ease with dying, and he also stands out from all the angels as he left his duty as an angel to become a human.
- In *Surf's Up*, both Big Z and Cody's friend Chicken Joe surfs solely for fun, while all the other competitors at the competition, especially Tank and Cody in the beginning, compete only to win.
- In *Clerks*, Silent Bob stands silent in contrast to characters like Jay and Randal, who talk constantly. Even though both Jay and Randal can be considered to be slackers as well, Silent Bob stands out thanks to his silence. Together, they all differ greatly from the ambitious and troubled protagonist, Dante.

- In *Notting Hill*, Spike is somewhat of an opposite to William, both in neatness and in understanding of each other. It is a wonder that they can stand living together.
- In *Office Space*, Lawrence has gone beyond what Peter and all his co-workers at the software company has concerning enjoying life and doing what you want to do. While most of Peter's co-workers tend to see a lot of problems, Lawrence seems to be completely care-free.
- In *Finding Nemo*, Marlin and Crush the turtle have completely different ways in raising their children, and Marlin is furthermore a very anxious character, while Crush does not seem to worry at all.
- In *The Descendants*, Matt repeatedly becomes angry at Sid for saying inappropriate things, and he certainly does not approve fully about his daughter hanging out with him. Sid, however, simply does not care that much about anything.

Slackers help clarifying the need from the want

Advice-givers and guides in general often help the protagonists in films to separate the need from the want. For example, a character may want to accomplish a difficult task, but does not realize the need of support from friends in order to be able to do so. By instead having a character suggesting the ambitious and determined protagonist to take it easy for a while, and to step back in order to see the whole picture, the protagonist often finds it easier to overcome the obstacle in question.

Instead of trying to, for example, get over a great wall to reach the other side, one could perhaps calm down for a while in order to find another solution to the problem, like finding a way around the wall instead of over it, and what better character to promote "being calm" and "taking it easy" than a slacker?

It simply seems to fit the slackers very well to think outside the box in this way, and perhaps that is one of the reasons to why they are put in the role of advice-givers. Each need and want may look very different from case to case, but it seems like they are always present within a protagonist's mind, and that the slackers in the films making the context of this analysis always help separating them from each other.

- In *The Junglebook*, Baloo clarifies Mowgli's need from his want by telling him to stop looking for something that can't be found. What Mowgli wanted was to stay in the jungle, but what he needed was to return to the humans.

- In *True Grit*, Mattie wants to revenge her father, but needs a new father-figure, and finds that in Rooster Cogburn.
- In *Aristocats*, Duchess' kittens want to go home, and get their need of a father-figure filled by Thomas O'Malley while trying.
- In *Sideways*, Miles wants to wait for the right moments before doing anything, but Jack tells him that he needs to cease the moments instead.
- In *Little Miss Sunshine*, Grandpa Edwin reminds his family before dying that wanting to win a competition never is more important than the need to support your friends and family.
- In *Drunken Master*, the drunken boxing that Beggar So teaches Wong makes the user resisting the want to fight with all their might to win a seemingly impossible fight, instead realizing the need to trick their opponents via underestimation.
- In *Star Wars*, as Luke learns patience from Yoda, he realizes his need to save Lord Vader from the dark side instead of simply striking him down, as he originally wanted.
- In *The Lion King*, Timon and Pumba teaches Simba the need of not worrying too much about your past in order to move on with your life, instead of wanting to loath yourself for what you think you have done.
- In *City of Angels*, Nathaniel makes Seth realizing the need to become a human in order to enjoy life instead of wanting to remain safe as a senseless angel, longing for love without ever having felt the meaning of it.
- In *Surf's Up*, Big Z teaches Cody the need to let go and have fun when all Cody wants is to win the competition.
- In *Clerks*, Dante gets reminded by Silent Bob that he have already got all he needs in his relationship with Veronica, and that wanting a relationship with Caitlin never was the right thing for him.
- In *Notting Hill*, Spike reminds William that he needs Anna, instead of wanting to protect himself from further emotional complications with her.
- In *Office Space*, Lawrence teaches Peter that wanting money is secondary to the need to find something worth doing in order to have a rich life.
- In *Finding Nemo*, Marlin the clownfish learns the need to let children live their own lives, and to resist wanting to protect them all the time from Crush the sea turtle and his son Squirt.

- In *The Descendants*, Matt gains an insight while talking to Sid about not necessarily needing to talk about ones issues, but having a good time instead in order to move on with grief.

Conclusion

Slackers in real life may be seen as sloppy parasites to society who few wish to befriend and, perhaps even more so, seldom would be asked for advice about self-achievement and success. Films, on the other hand, are often far from real life, however, since films are more about telling a story that works well with an audience compared to a story that resembles real life in all its various aspects.

It is fairly common in films to see a slacker character giving advice to an ambitious protagonist currently dwelling in self-doubt, and the reason for that seems to be thanks to the very same, sloppy and care-free characteristics of the slacker that perhaps made one question his qualifications as a mentor in the first place. Apart from simply being distinct from other characters, thereby helping to create an interesting yet easy group of characters in a film to follow and remember, slackerism is favorable to an advice-giver in many ways.

Being a friendly slacker with all the time in the world clearly makes it easier in films to get involved with a protagonist in need of support. The stereotypical film slacker tends to have an open kindness towards almost everyone around, so by having a character with a comforting, loving aura, accidental but necessary meetings like these can happen to the protagonist.

These meetings are also able to happen thanks to the lack of commitments the common slacker has. While not a requirement, giving an advice-giving character a lot of free time does make it a lot easier for a busy protagonist to meet with that character, since an idle slacker seldom is busy at all. Another recognizable characteristic of a slacker is that he seldom cares about what people might think of him if he says or does something radical.

This not only helps to create interesting situations where both wills and ways are crossed, but, more importantly, it enables an advice-giving character to say what he thinks about a protagonist's choices and views of what is important in life. That is why it becomes fitting to see a protagonist realize that what was once wanted was in the way for what was really needed after having spoken to a slacker.

Finally, what seems to be the biggest reason for the frequency of protagonists seeking advice from loafing slackers is that the slackers often display a great amount of self-confidence and self-fulfillment. While a protagonist struggles with completing a task out in the world, an internal struggle with who you really are is also almost always taking place within the protagonist, and it is often in these moments of self-doubts that advice is needed from someone who is experienced in finding yourself: a slacker.

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